



Positive Energy Solar part of fastest-growing industry in U.S.

April 1, 2015



Solar technology currently is the fastest-growing industry in the country, and New Mexico companies like employee-owned Positive Energy Solar, which is headquartered in Santa Fe and also has offices in Albuquerque, Las Cruces and Los Alamos, are riding the wave. Since the company was founded in 1997, it has grown every single year, recording a 30-percent growth rate in 2014 and anticipating at least a 30-percent growth again in 2015. The business was able to add about 30 jobs in 2014 and plans to add another 30 this year.

“The New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department determined that our company was the top installer of residential systems in New Mexico after analyzing solar tax credit data from 2014,” Positive Solar Energy CEO Regina Wheeler said. “New Mexicans invested over \$23 million in residential rooftop solar just last year, and Positive Energy Solar installed a lot of these systems.”

The company has moved its Albuquerque operations from a cramped 2,000-square-foot building to an 18,000-square-foot facility and plans to move into a larger operational facility in Santa Fe as well.

Many different factors play into Positive Energy Solar's success, including several types of assistance the company has received over the years through programs supported by Los Alamos National Laboratory and Los Alamos National Security, LLC. In 2012, Positive Energy Solar was among the first recipients of the [Northern New Mexico 20/20 Awards](#), for instance, and the [Regional Development Corporation](#) and [New Mexico Small Business Assistance Program](#) also have been able to lend a helping hand.

In 2014, sunshine-rich New Mexico finally became a top 10 state for solar development after California, North Carolina, Nevada, Massachusetts, Arizona, New Jersey, New York, Texas and Hawaii, but New Mexico is only in the early stages of realizing its full solar potential.

"All of this means additional growth potential and jobs," Wheeler noted. "Doña Ana County led the state's solar installations with 1.54 systems per 1,000 residents in 2014, and Santa Fe County followed with 0.87 systems. These numbers do not include solar energy for cities, utilities and schools."

Jobs and employee ownership

Positive Energy Solar strives to hire local talent to accommodate its exponential growth, and local efforts such as the Santa Fe Community College's Solar Energy Certification Program are training the much-needed workforce.

"We need the best and the brightest to deliver great services to our customers," Wheeler noted. "But it is soft skills like great communication, team work, leadership and problem-solving that are most important."

Since opening its doors, Positive Energy Solar has transitioned from a sole proprietorship to a partnership and now an employee-owned business in order to allow employees to share in the company's success and empower individuals. Employees who choose to purchase shares can do so after a year with the company and pay for the shares over time.

The business also has a profit-sharing plan for all employees, whether employee-owners or not, and interested employees are able to use their profit-sharing check to buy shares.

Employee-owners own regular shares in the company, have voting rights at the shareholder meetings and elect the Board of Directors. The majority of the operational decisions are made by a team of managers, most of whom are employee-owners, but the larger employee-owner pool has opportunities to discuss all potential changes and provide input.

Benefit Corporation

Positive Energy Solar is the only solar company in New Mexico that is a certified Benefit Corporation (B-Corp), a type of for-profit corporate entity that includes specifically defined goals for making a positive impact on society and the environment in addition to trying to earn a profit or maximize profits. B-Corps differ from traditional corporations in purpose, accountability and transparency but not in taxation.

Some of Positive Energy Solar's beneficial practices include supporting local and state legislation to promote sustainable communities, conserving energy and using solar power for the company's own buildings, sourcing materials locally, evaluating products for lifecycle impacts, having an effective recycling program, serving on the New Mexico Green Chamber of Commerce's Board of Directors and guaranteeing 100 percent customer satisfaction.

"Positive Energy Solar is on a mission to bring affordable, clean solar systems to New Mexicans with a commitment to high integrity and high engagement," Wheeler said.

"The solar industry is a bright spot for the country and the state."

For more information on Positive Energy Solar, including the jobs currently offered, visit the [Positive Energy Solar](#) website.

You also might be interested in the Santa Fe Community College's [Solar Energy Certification Program](#) page.

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